Consideration of Disability

Behavioral Summary

XX is a fourteen year old male attending school at XXX Middle in the eighth grade. He presents with a highly complex psychiatric history. He further presents with significant psychiatric needs that are currently being managed with a combination of inpatient and outpatient psychiatric visits/hospitalizations, individual and group therapy, and medication management. XX does seem to present as somewhat less behaviorally problematic in the school setting, but he still demonstrates significant concerns with internalizing behaviors and socialization.

Emotional Disability (ED)

Based on results of the current evaluation, it does appear that XX's in or out of school emotionality influences his learning in such a way as would affect his educational placement, programming, or discipline. XX demonstrates the following IDEA characteristics of Emotional Disability, to a marked degree, for a long period of time, which is sufficiently different from his average peers, as follows:

NO An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. Based on current evaluation data, there does not appear to be an inability to learn. His teachers indicate that he is able to work on grade level with support when he is able to attend school more regularly. He does not meet this criterion.

YES An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. XX is a kind and compliant child in the school setting. However, he is socially withdrawn and does not seem to have a peer group with which he has been able to develop friendships within. He himself reported that he is not “good at making friend.” While he does not have any problem relating to and following directions of his teachers, he does not have any particular satisfactory relationships with them. This is likely due to his inability to maintain emotional stability and attend school for extended periods of time. He does meet this criterion.

YES Inappropriate types of behaviors and feelings under normal circumstances. Parent interview data suggests that XX engages in a significant amount of inappropriate behaviors including but not limited to habitual lying, gagging when eating, not being able to keep food down, social withdrawal, disruptive behavior, alleged sexual assault of a family member, a history of a compulsion to masturbate at home and school, mood lability, racing thoughts, and manipulative behavior. While these behaviors are not necessarily observed in the school setting, they definitely have an adverse effect on his ability to maintain school attendance. He does meet this criterion.

YES A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. This characteristic includes behaviors, thoughts, and feelings which signal "unhappiness." The unhappiness or depression must be general and pervasive; that is, occurring over most if not all, of the student's life situations. XX’s emotional state is very labile. He presents as socially withdrawn, flat, unmotivated to seek out peer relationships, has difficulty sleeping, does not want to leave his home, is dysphoric, and irritable. He is currently diagnosed with Bipolar I Disorder. His outside evaluation completed just five months ago indicates that he struggles with depression and hopelessness, feels as though there is no future for him at this point, and experiences some suicidal ideation. He does meet this criterion.

YES A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. XX reports feeling nervous, reportedly experiences social anxiety, is nervous in school hallways, and worries about school performance. He does meet this criterion.

**Based on current evaluation data, XX DOES MEET TEA eligibility as a student with an Emotional Disability (ED).**

Autism (AU)

The Texas Administrative Code and Texas Educational Agency define Autism as a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. **Autism does not apply if a child’s educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance.**

In the areas of communication and social interactions, XX presents with several strengths. He has the ability to engage in appropriate eye contact when communicating, can report on specific non-routine events, and spontaneously shares some personal information. He responds well to directives, is polite with others, and has a good vocabulary. However, he also presents with several weaknesses in need of remediation with regards to social communication. For instance, XX lacks age appropriate social reciprocity, one of the hallmark characteristics in identifying students on the autism spectrum. Social reciprocity is the back and forth flow of social interaction. The term reciprocity refers to how the behavior of one person influences and is influenced by the behavior of another person and vice versa. When working with XX, the evaluator made several attempts to “press” XX socially. However, he only responded appropriately one time. Further his mother and one of his teacher indicating that he lacks social reciprocity. His communication was also very flat and relatively quiet and difficult to hear. His use of conversational and emphatic or emotional gestures is significantly diminished as well. While he does have conversational skills, these are vastly improved when talking about highly preferred topics such as lizards and other reptiles. His emotional responses to most social context are very flat and limited. XX struggles to make friends, does not have a regular peer group with which he socializes, is socially withdrawn, and he lacks the desire to engage with others.

Stereotyped and atypical behavioral characteristics were also reported by his parent. These include self-stimulatory behaviors such as rocking and pacing, obsessive compulsive tendencies, a need for structure and routine, unusual sensory responses (oversensitivity to loud noise, bothered by tags in fabric), difficult adjusting to changes in routine, and obsessions with reptiles and lizards.

**When considering all of XX’s behavioral and social characteristics he does exhibit characteristics of a high functioning autism spectrum disorder. However, the Texas Education Agency does not recognize Autism as a disability that is appropriate for students who educational performance is adversely effected PRIMARILY because the child has an Emotional Disturbance. So while he does exhibit characteristics of a high functioning autism spectrum disorder, he does not meet the TEA eligibility criteria for the condition of Autism at this time.**